DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 290 986 CG 020 518

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TITLE The Use of Social Influence Videotapes in the Training of Counselors.
PUB DATE 21 Nov 87
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the North Central Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (St. Louis, MO, November 19-22, 1987).
PUB TYPE Reports - General (140) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Students; Competence; *Counseling Techniques; *Counselor Attitudes; Counselor Client Relationship; *Counselor Training; Higher Education; Instructional Materials; *Social Influences; Trust (Psychology); Validity; *Videotape Recordings
IDENTIFIERS Physical Attractiveness

ABSTRACT

One set of counselor behaviors that has been highly investigated over recent years has been the social influence behaviors. Despite the considerable research interest in social influence theory as it relates to counseling, there has been little attention to the demonstration of the presence or absence of such behavioral skills as expertness, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. In connection with another study, a set of videotapes were developed to demonstrate these three behaviors in a clear, relatively undisputable manner. A client role-play was developed to be maximally relevant to the undergraduate student participants. Four unrehearsed, 7-minute counseling sessions were carried out with the same male counselor, who varied his counseling responses from one videotape to another. During one of the interviews, a non-deficient demonstration, the counselor displayed high levels of all three targeted social influence variables (expert, attractive, and trustworthy). In each of the remaining videotapes, one counselor characteristic was intentionally lowered. The counselor continued to make empathic responses directed to the client's concerns. The videotapes were validated using a group of 13 doctoral students' ratings of each counselor on expertness, attractiveness, and trustworthiness. Students were fascinated to see a counselor behave in ways that illustrated the social influence behaviors. The same videotapes can serve as excellent discussion starters in beginning counseling classes. (ABL)

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ED290986

The Use of Social Influence Videotapes in the Training of Counselors

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Presentation at the

North Central Association for Counselor Education and Supervision

Annual Meeting

November 21, 1987

St. Louis, MO

CG 020518

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The Use of Social Influence Videotapes in the Training of Counselors

One set of counselor behaviors that has been highly investigated over recent years has been the social influence behaviors originally addressed in the counseling literature by Strong (1968). Corrigan, Dell, Lewis, and Schmidt (1980) briefly summarize the core of Strong's argument as follows:

> Extrapolating from research in social psychology, Strong postulated that the extent to which counselors are perceived as expert, attractive, and trustworthy would reduce the likelihood of their being discredited. . . Strong suggested a two-stage model of counseling. In the first stage, counselors enhance their perceived expertness, attractiveness, trustworthiness, and clients' involvement in counseling. In the second stage, counselors use their influence to precipitate opinion and/or behavior change in clients. (p. 396)

Corrigan et al. (1980) reviewed an extensive set of research investigations related to the influence that counselors have upon observers' and/or clients' perceptions. They concluded that, at least in one-time analogue interviews, counselors can and do influence clients to change their attitudes. Additionally, Corrigan et al. conclude that there is some evidence (although not undisputable in nature) which ties the counselor characteristics of expertness, trustworthiness and attractiveness to the extent of a counselor's influence. Thus, counselors with

differing levels of the three social influence behaviors (i.e., expertness, attractiveness and trustworthiness) tend to vary in their ability to influence changes in their clients.

Subsequent to the publication of the Corrigan et al. (1980) review, the topic of social influence in counseling has continued as a prominent focus of counseling research (Beutler, Crago & Arizmendi, 1986). The development of the Counselor Rating Form (Barak & LaCrosse, 1975) and the Counselor Rating Form - Short Version (Corrigan & Schmidt, 1983) provided well-recognized instruments to allow ratings of the perceptions of a counselor's expertness, trustworthiness and attractiveness.

Despite the considerable research interest in social influence theory as it relates to counseling, there has been little attention to the demonstration of the presence or absence of such behavioral skills as expertness, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. In connection with another study, a set of videotapes were developed to demonstrate these three behaviors in a clear, relatively undisputable manner.

A client role-play was developed to be maximally relevant to the undergraduate student participants. The client on the videotape was a freshman who had come to the university to be with a boyfriend from her home. She and her boyfriend were now growing apart, and she was feeling depressed and alone. A script for the role-playing was not prepared; the client was given a detailed description of the client's concerns and of the emotions underlying those concerns. Four unrehearsed, 7-minute counseling

sessions were carried out with the same male counselor, varying his counseling responses from one videotape to another.

During one of the interviews, a non-deficient demonstration (EAT -- i.e., expert, attractive, and trustworthy), the counselor displayed high levels of all three targeted social influence variables. In each of the remaining three videotapes, one counselor characteristic was intentionally lowered through direct behavioral evidence. For the low expertness counselor role (AT$\bar{}$E -- attractive and trustworthy but not expert), the counselor indicated he was an intern rather than a psychologist; he did not recognize the name of a residence hall on campus; and he was confused at client's reference to the word "catharsis." For the low attractiveness role (ET$\bar{}$A -- expert and trustworthy but not attractive), the counselor wore blue jeans, had uncombed hair, chewed gum, blew his nose, and fidgeted uncomfortably. Finally, in the low trustworthiness role (EA$\bar{}$T -- expert and attractive but not trustworthy), the counselor offhandedly revealed the name of another student he had seen with similar problems; he described his schedule as so busy that the client might not be able to see him as scheduled each week; and he indicated his intention to contact the client's parents about her difficulties at school.

Although the videotapes differed on the dimension of the social influence characteristics, all other aspects of the tapes were intended to be as identical as possible. Unlike some previous studies where the counselor's role was "too exaggerated

to permit generalization to counseling practice" (Corrigan, Dell, Lewis & Schmidt, 1980, p. 406), the counselor on the present videotapes continued to make empathic responses directed to the client's concerns in each of the four counselor roles.

Using the Videotapes as a Teaching Tool

Advanced Counseling Students

When the videotapes were originally developed, they needed to be reviewed for content validity by a group of expert counselors. A group of 13 doctoral students with experience in counseling were asked to view each of the four videotapes in a random order and to rate each counselor on one-item scales representing expertness, attractiveness, and trustworthiness. The EAT tape was rated highest on all three scales, and each videotape that had been intended to be deficient in one area was rated significantly lower than any of the three other videotapes on the scale assessing that area. These data provided content validity for the four videotapes.

What was particularly remarkable about this content validation process was the reaction of the doctoral students to the experience. In addition to the initial completion of the ratings of each videotape, the class had later discussed their reactions to the counselor on each of the tapes. The discussion was wide ranging and active. Although all students certainly did not pick up on exactly the same factors in each tape, there was common agreement that the non-deficient video was definitely the best. Students who had been reading the counseling literature

were fascinated to see a counselor behave in ways that illustrated the social influence behaviors. Those who were very new to the doctoral program felt reaffirmed faith in their ability as counselors and supervisors in that, even without advanced knowledge of social influence theory, they had identified many of the same issues of concern expressed by others.

Since the initial content validation, these same videotapes have been used to introduce the process of supervisor observation to two additional advanced classes. Students have been asked to observe the videos and to write notes to themselves on what they might wish to discuss with the counselor involved. After all tapes have been reviewed, a discussion has been encouraged which eventually leads to a re-explanation of Strong's social influence theory of counseling.

Beginning Counseling Students

The same videotapes can serve as excellent discussion starters in beginning counseling classes. These tapes have been shown in three counseling pre-practicum classes in the past year and a half. Inevitably, the beginning students can identify the counselor that they prefer, but the discussions have illustrated that the beginning student is often unable to label directly some of the behaviors that they don't like (particularly in the nonexpert and nonattractive roles). Efforts to bring out specific negative student reactions through the discussion have proved very interesting and, very likely, have been of value to

the students in forcing them to clarify their own reactions. Finally, as with the advanced students, the discussion of these tapes has one additional positive feature over the use of any other videotape: it allows an early exposure for students to this very prominent area of counseling research. Beginning practicum students are allowed to see, first hand, the process of social influence occur in the videotape.

Summary

Although the videotapes discussed herein are readily available to anyone who might wish to copy them, it is suggested that it might be a worthwhile educational process to create new tapes along the same lines. As is often true with videotaped demonstrations, the maximal learning (about whatever skill is demonstrated) is accomplished by those who create the videotape. Certainly, the authors of the present paper would be very interested in reviewing whatever social influence videotapes that may be produced. For research purposes, a social influence videotape with a female counselor and male client would be of particular interest.

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